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SUMMARY

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

By Georges CELESTIN,
Director General of CINAM

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CINAM.

1. The development region.

(i) The role of the region is often misunderstood, and indeed the term is ambiguous. Not only the type of development but also the way in which the region is related to the nation and the aims involved enable the region to be defined.

(ii) Considered as a practical planning unit, the region is justified from four aspects:

- differentiation in development policy, which the region adapts to local realities;
- decentralisation: the regional level enables development policy to be implemented flexibly and efficiently;
- coherent action, whose coordination can best be achieved at regional level;
- participation: the region enables the men at the bottom and the men at the top to meet and facilitates a two-way flow between them.

(iii) In order to play its part the development region must possess a well-equipped and well-defined centre enabling its influence to radiate throughout the region. A concept rather than a reality, the region is embodied in flexible structures which can be adapted as evolution progresses.

(iv) The delimitation of a region results from a compromise between minimum population, maximum area and existing administrative divisions (e.g. as in Senegal and Madagascar).

2. Regional development policies.

(i) The aims of a regional development policy will depend upon decisions not only on principal activities and products and the most suitable economic and social structures but also on the spatial organisation of the area covered by the region, the employment and training of labour, the instruments of public intervention, the part to be played by the local population and lastly the rate of growth.

(ii) These decisions must take into account the vocation of the region, which is often contingent and relative.

(iii) Trade, competition and unequal growth will make regions dependent on each other. This may be the path towards integration favourable to the general development of the country, provided that regional policies are dovetailed with national policy.

(iv) The role assigned to each region within the national framework will be determined not only by the driving forces capable of being generated by "motive" regions and by resources to be obtained from export but also by speciali-

sation to ensure the best use of production capacity, by complementary factors tending to intensify inter-regional trade, by the organisation of migration streams and lastly by solidarity between regions.

(v) Decisions will have to be made regarding priorities and the best deployment of efforts and resources. The main criteria on which these decisions are based will be the extent and rapidity with which potential can be realised, the anticipated effectiveness of investment and effort, the critical state of certain areas or regions and the variety of possibilities in particular regions. This may (as in Madagascar) lead to the development of certain products in poorly-endowed regions and to the limitation of other products in regions which are in a more favourable position.

3. Characteristics of regional planning.

The preparation of an initial development plan involves the following features:

(a) Outlook

(i) Development is action rather than condition and its impetus must be generated by the plan. The plan is a scheme rather than a forecast and should arouse and direct a desire to act.

(ii) As a result the plan will partly be prospective, by proposing the creation of new types of social and economic structures and ways of life, and partly propulsive, by enabling the region to grow.

(iii) Planning will thus deal less with descriptive and quantitative techniques than with explanatory diagrams indicating the ways and means of effecting changes.

(b) Alternatives

(i) The coordination of a number of regional plans with each other and with a national plan is only possible by comparison and reference between the two levels of planning.

(ii) By making planning a continuous process, adjustments will be facilitated and those responsible be enabled to take suitable steps at the right time to ensure that development proceeds.

(c) Experience

(i) The initial regional plan, imperfect because based on existing data and resources, but nevertheless capable of improvement, will involve the analysis of past and present experience, supplemented by an active study of conditions of change.

(d) Participation

(i) The association of the population with the preparation of the plan is necessary if the latter is to respond to the wishes, needs and possibilities of the inhabitants of the region concerned, on whom the success of the development depends.

(ii) Institutions should be set up to promote discussion between representatives of the inhabitants and the planners.

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